

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

DPC 173

TRANSCRIPT OF PRESS AND RADIO NEWS BRIEFING, THURSDAY,  
AUGUST 23, 1962, 12:25 p.m., EDT

MR. REAP: First, we have with us today, Mr. Emil Schuttenhelm, who is President of the Netherlands Television Institute. We are right glad to have you with us. I am told that Mr. Schuttenhelm's position is that of our Newton Minow.

You have Press Release No. 515, which we gave you this morning. It is a statement of Ambassador Morrison at the OAS yesterday afternoon.

And you already have Press Release No. 516--the swearing in of Bill Leonhart, the Ambassador to Tanganyika.

[Please refer to Press Release No. 515, dated August 22, 1962, "Statement by the Honorable deLesseps S. Morrison, U. S. Representative on the Council of the Organization of American States, at the O.A.S. Council Meeting, 3:00 p.m., E.D.T., Wednesday, August 22, 1962."]

[Also, refer to Press Release No. 516, dated August 23, 1962, "William Leonhart sworn in as U. S. Ambassador to Tanganyika."]

I have a short announcement to make.

The Canadians are issuing the following press release about this time:

The Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Honorable Howard Green, announced today that he will be holding informal talks in Ottawa

taking in the Near East. Could you provide us with some information on the trip, and what he is doing there?

A Well, my understanding is that Mr. Feldman went to Paris to discuss trade matters there. And then unofficially he went on down to Israel, and went to the Weizmann Institute-- Wait a minute. He took advantage of his trip to accept a long-standing invitation to visit the Weizmann Institute.

Q Weizmann, W-e-i-z-m-a-n-n.

Q Where is the Weizmann Institute?

Q At Rehovot. That is below Tel Aviv.

A His stay in Israel afforded opportunity to pay calls on Israeli officials and visit various sites of interest.

But we do not know with whom he had appointments. His trip was unofficial. He was not there as a representative of the U. S. Government.

Q That means it was a private trip then?

A Yes.

Q Mr. Reap, there is a story from Moscow saying Russia wants to sell oil to Japan. Do you have any comment on that?

A No. I am not adequately informed on that.

Q Do you have any information about reports that rocket-launching sites are being set up in Cuba?

A Yes, we have had reports like that. But I do not intend here by answering that to indicate that we can confirm that that is true. I just don't know. We have had the reports.

Q Well, Joe, were these reports, or rumors, or what?

A I would put them in both categories.

Q Are these unconfirmed reports, sir?

A Unconfirmed.

Q In what categories, Joe?

A I said they are reports or rumors. I would say this: a rumor reported here becomes a report. But we have also had rumors.

Q I just--

Q But the main point is that you have no independent substantiation. Is that correct?

A That is correct, yes.

Q Can you repeat it?

[Laughter]

Q That's a joke? Anyway you said it, if you gave it on the record.

A You can get it from her [the reporter] later.

Q Thank you. Okay.

Q Joe, I think you ought to be a little more specific on this. There have long been rumors of rocket

sites being built in Cuba. There have been rumors in effect on this for the last two years. Are you saying that the State Department has heard those rumors, or are you saying that the State Department now has some information that indicates that is not correct?

A No, I specifically said that was not so in answer to John's question. We have had these rumors and reports, and there is new currency given them within the last week. I understand a paper up in New England has something like this.

We do know that in the last few days of July there were something like--I think it is five passenger ships, and about 11 cargo ships going into Cuba. These are essentially-- They are all Bloc ships. And we do have information that there are 15 more--about 15 more on the way. We do have information that some of the passengers on this (I have no definite information as to numbers) are technicians.

Q What kind of technicians?

A Well, some of the equipment which the cargo ships have delivered, which the Cubans have gotten before, is military hardware, communications equipment and the like. I assume the technicians would go along with that.

Q You say these ships apparently carried cargoes including military hardware and communications

equipment?

A Yes.

Q Any indication of the nature of this military hardware?

A No, Neal, I can't be specific.

Q Anything to link them with rocket launches, which is what you started out with?

A Well, I will say it again: that I don't have any information that would confirm that there are rocket launches, and the like there.

If you ask me what this means, I could only suggest that perhaps Mr. Castro feels that he needs a great amount of military equipment to ensure his own security. We are aware of the many reports which come from time to time about disturbances among his own people in the different provinces there.

Q Joe, is what you are saying that the majority aboard these cargo ships isn't military?

A I didn't say "majority." I say it includes that, I know. But I did say that Mr. Castro believes he needs a great amount of military cargo, and the implication would be that that is what the ships have as their cargo.

I just can't break it down, John, as to what he is getting. He has gotten a substantial amount of

military equipment.

Q Can any label be put on this traffic from the United States point of view--as qualifying them? Has the United States been concerned with this traffic of arms and other implements, or alarmed, or which way would you qualify?

Q Or unhappy about it?

A You mean "Am I alarmed"?

Q Not you personally, no.

A Well, I am not. We would be concerned; there is certainly no alarm here. We would be concerned about the purpose that he might have in mind.

Q For instance?

A Adventures. Adventures among other Latin countries.

Q President Kennedy said yesterday that according to his thinking the recent shipment, or whatever is shipped there, is not aimed against any Central American country.

A We don't have information that it is.

Q Thank you, Joe.

[Whereupon, at 12:43 p.m., the press conference was concluded.]

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